



Inspection Report

Course provider: University of Suffolk

Course approval: MA Social Work

Inspection dates: 31st March – 2nd April 2026

Report date:	20 th August 2026
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	18 th August 2026
Date conditions met and approved:	TBC

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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, 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 if we decide the conditions are not met.

Summary of Inspection

15. Course details: The University of Suffolk wish to run a two-year masters degree in social work.

Inspection ID	USUCPP514
Course provider	University of Suffolk
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	MA Social Work
Mode of Study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	20
Proposed first intake	September 2026
Date of inspection	31 st March – 2 nd April 2026
Inspection team	Joseph Hubbard (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Priscilla McGuire (Lay Inspector) Louise Robson (Registrant Inspector)

Language

16. In this document we describe the University of Suffolk as ‘the education provider’ or ‘the university’ and we describe the MA Social Work as ‘the course’ or ‘the programme’.

Inspection

17. A remote inspection took place from 31st March to 2nd April 2026 via Microsoft Teams. As part of this process the inspection team planned to meet with key stakeholders including students on existing social work courses, 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

No parties disclosed a conflict of interest.

Meetings with students

20. The inspection team met with three students on existing BA Social Work and BA Social Work Degree Apprenticeship programmes, including student representatives. Discussions included placements, interprofessional learning, and assessment.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the course team, admissions team, senior management, practice-based learning team, and support services.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in the design and delivery of the university's social work programmes through the group Social Work Voices. Discussions included admissions, training, and assessment.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council, and CF Social Work.

Findings

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

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

25. The university provided documentary evidence for this standard, confirming their entry requirements, interview questions, and details of the written task. Academic standards would be ensured by the requirement for a minimum 2:2 previous degree, along with the written task. English language capability would be established by the requirement for a GCSE grade C/4 or equivalent in English, along with interview performance.

26. The details of the admissions process were triangulated at inspection through meetings with the admissions team, course team, and students. It was confirmed that ICT (information and communications technology) abilities would be assessed through engagement with the online admissions process, and a self-declaration of the required skills prior to interview. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

27. The entry requirements for the course included experience of working with vulnerable people in any setting. Documentation was provided regarding the standardised process across the university for consideration of accredited prior learning where applicable. While none of the interview questions provided explicitly addressed prior experience, the course team and admissions staff confirmed on inspection that prior experience was assessed at interview through applicants' responses to questions around their motivation for choosing to study social work. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

28. Documentary evidence was provided to demonstrate that it is the aim for all interview panels to include an employer partner and a person with lived experience of social work, alongside a member of academic staff.

29. During the inspection, the inspection team met with people with lived experience from Social Work Voices, who confirmed they had meaningful involvement in decision-

making about applicant outcomes following interview. Employer partners also confirmed at inspection that they were involved in interview panels. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.4

30. The university provided documentary evidence demonstrating their processes for assessing the suitability of applicants' conduct, character, and health. The course entry requirements included completion of an enhanced DBS check and suitability declaration.

31. At inspection, the course team outlined the procedure for instances where applicants declared a conviction or other potential suitability issues, which included a panel assessment to determine suitability. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

32. Documentary evidence was provided prior to the inspection showing that there was a university-wide equality and diversity policy in place, and that annual course monitoring processes required identification of and response to any EDI (equality, diversity, and inclusion) issues. A Code of Practice on Reasonable Adjustments for Students confirmed that reasonable adjustments could apply to the admissions process itself, and the course website directed applicants to contact the university for any support needed.

33. During inspection meetings, admissions and course staff confirmed that EDI data was gathered at admissions stage, and responded to in an ad hoc way rather than through a formal route due to the small size of cohorts. It was also confirmed at inspection that people with lived experience involved in interviewing received regular mandatory EDI training. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.6

34. Review of the university's webpages confirmed that information is available to applicants regarding fees, course structure, placements, assessment methods, and staff research interests. The course webpage states that graduates of the course will be eligible to apply for Social Work England registration, and open day presentation slides include further details about the role of a social worker. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

35. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that students would spend the required 200 days learning across at least two practice settings, including 30 skills days. The course handbook made clear the requirements for attendance at placement days and skills days, and the placement handbook outlined the process required to make up learning if a skills day was missed. The quality assurance form for placements included checks to establish which placements involved statutory interventions, to ensure that all students were placed in at least one placement with sufficient statutory tasks.

36. The details of attendance monitoring for placement days and skills days were triangulated with students and the course team at inspection. The placements team also outlined how they ensured each student's placements were in contrasting settings across their course. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

37. Review of the documentary evidence provided demonstrated that there were procedures in place to quality assure practice placements and ensure these enabled students to meet the professional standards. Pre-placement quality assurance checks were made for each placement to ensure a suitable learning environment, and a Quality Assurance Practice Panel was held annually to review placement outcomes.

38. The practice learning agreement form required students to input their self-identified learning needs in relation to the placement, and learning opportunities available at the placement were listed. The assessment of students within both placement modules then served to ensure they were gaining the necessary knowledge and skills. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.3

39. The practice learning agreement included an induction checklist to ensure students received appropriate induction, and set out expectations for supervision arrangements and other practical considerations. The quality assurance processes outlined above served to ensure that where these expectations are not being met, this was flagged up and addressed.

40. The placement handbook made reference to workload expectations, directing to the learning agreement, which addressed learning opportunities but not workload. At inspection, some students stated that within high-volume teams they had been treated as staff rather than students in terms of workload. These students reported not feeling

confident to raise their workload as an issue, due to a lack of clarity on what the expectations for their workload should be.

41. The inspectors therefore recommend that a condition is set against this standard around ensuring that workload expectations are laid out clearly within documentation provided to students, practice educators, and supervisors. The aim of this would be to formalise discussion around expected workload between the student, practice educator, and supervisor, before and during placement. Consideration was given as to whether the finding 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 we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in [proposed outcome](#).

Standard 2.4

42. As discussed within standard 2.2, the practice learning agreement form required students to input their self-identified learning needs in relation to the placement, and learning opportunities available at the placement were listed. The assessment of students within both placement modules then served to ensure the type of tasks they were undertaking were appropriate for their stage of education and learning. This demonstrated that the standard was met.

Standard 2.5

44. Prior to the inspection, the module specification was provided for Fundamentals of Social Work (Preparation for Practice), which was the preparation for practice module for the programme. Students were required to pass the assessment for this module as a prerequisite for their first placement module, to ensure their suitability for direct work with service users. The assessment for the module was multidimensional and included a role play element which was assessed by people with lived experience of social work. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.6

45. Documentary evidence provided by the course provider confirmed that they had several systems in place to ensure PEs (practice educators) were suitably qualified, experienced, and on the Social Work England register. The university maintained their

own record of all PEs which included evidence of qualification, currency, and any other relevant suitability information. The university carried out and recorded a check annually on 1st December to ensure all listed PEs remained on the register. Another annual check was carried out following the quality assurance of practice learning process, to input any relevant information.

46. At inspection, the university confirmed that while they used only PEs employed by the LA (local authority) at the time of inspection, they would employ these same processes for independent PEs when they begin to use these in future. The inspectors determined that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

47. The university provided copies of their whistleblowing policy and complaints policy as part of their documentary evidence. The practice learning handbook outlined the process students should follow to raise any concerns while on placement, signposted students to the university's own whistleblowing policy and directed them to also be aware of placement settings' own policies. The practice learning agreement required confirmation that the placement had a whistleblowing policy, and the placement quality assurance form confirmed that the student had read and understood this.

48. At inspection, students confirmed that the meaning and importance of whistleblowing had been highlighted to them through both course content and placement meetings. The inspectors were in agreement that the standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

49. Documentation and narrative was provided to outline the management and governance structures for the social work programmes at the university, which the proposed course would also be subject to. The social work courses were located within the School of Health, Sciences and Society. The course handbook outlined the roles and responsibilities of course team members, and a number of documents were provided with overviews of organisational governance structures, but it was not fully clear how these structures fit together.

50. At inspection, a further overview was provided both verbally and through an updated diagram which clarified how the various levels of governance fit together. The inspectors determined that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

51. Review of the documentary evidence confirmed that practice learning agreements would be in place for each placement. The content of the template practice learning agreement form ensured that the learning opportunities available on each placement would meet the relevant regulatory standards. Memorandum of cooperation agreements were in place with placement providers for existing courses, and these will be expanded to include the proposed MA.

52. The agreement form and placement handbook also set out the processes to be followed in instances of placement breakdown. The first step was for concerns to be raised and addressed within supervision; should the concerns not be resolved at this level, a Resolution Meeting could be held. If necessary, this could then escalate to a concerns or action plan meeting.

53. Discussions with employer partner representatives during the inspection confirmed that they had a shared understanding with the university regarding the placement requirements for this course, in terms of both quality and volume. The university also confirmed that work was ongoing to expand their relationships with providers in the PVI (private, voluntary, and independent) sector, in order to bolster placement availability. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

54. The university's narrative evidence stated that they would ensure placement providers have the necessary policies and procedures regarding student health, wellbeing, and risk through several processes. Availability of the relevant policies would first be checked during initial quality assurance of each placement provider, prior to placement of a student. Once a student was allocated a placement, provision of relevant policies would then be checked again as part of the placement learning agreement meeting. The QAPL (quality assurance of placement learning) process would then flag up any presenting issues which indicated that a placement does not have the required policies, or the support systems underpinning these. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

55. The university outlined the various routes through which employer partners were involved in management and monitoring of their social work programmes, including a

Practice Learning Forum and Curriculum Development and Design Event (CDDE). Employer partner representatives confirmed at inspection that they and university staff also attend Social Work Area Network meetings, where information was shared on regional workforce trends which could inform the development of courses. A Practitioners Into Teaching scheme provided a further route for employer partner input into course content and delivery.

56. The university engaged with employer partners through the Practice Assessment Panel as part of the QAPL process. Regarding the allocation of practice education, employer partner representatives confirmed during the inspection that they discussed and arranged placement matching with the university through the Practice Learning Forum meetings. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

57. The primary mechanisms for monitoring and improvement of the course would be an annual course report, which must be completed for all programmes at the university, and regular module evaluations for each module on the course. Stakeholder input on course improvements was then gathered through specific meetings; such as those listed within standard 3.4 for employer partners (Practice Learning Forum, Practice Assessment Panel, CDDEs). People with lived experience provided their input through Social Work Voices meetings, and ad hoc input around their involvement in course delivery. Student feedback was gathered through Student Voice meetings and module evaluations.

58. At inspection, representatives of each stakeholder group confirmed that they provided feedback for the university's social work programmes, and can see material improvements made in response to their input. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met, with a recommendation to collate stakeholder input into one place in order to formalise and consolidate it. Full details of the recommendation can be found in [proposed outcome](#).

Standard 3.6

59. The university's narrative evidence stated that there was a shortage of social workers within their region, as evidenced by the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), which has identified health and social care as a priority area. The rationale for the introduction of a further route into social work was based on this identified need, in combination with falling application numbers on the university's existing routes. Internal validation documentation included projected planned student

numbers and resourcing for those numbers. Approval was in place for a further 1 full time equivalent course team member should numbers increase to more than the projected 20 students.

60. At inspection, employer partners confirmed that the addition of an MA route was positive and responsive to local workforce needs, in terms of both increasing numbers and broadening routes into social work. Placement sufficiency was discussed with the placement team and employer partners, and both groups were confident that there were sufficient placements available to support the MA. Recognising that an MA course may attract more international students and therefore more non-drivers, the placements team were actively working to increase the number of non-driving placements through developing partnerships with PVI providers. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

61. The mapping document outlined that the role of lead social worker for the programme would be shared between the course lead and the head of social work. The members of staff in these roles were both registered with Social Work England, and their CVs confirm that they were appropriately qualified for the role. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was sufficient to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

62. The inspectors' review of the staff CVs provided within the university's evidence submission confirmed that their backgrounds reflected a breadth of professional experience and expertise. The mapping narrative also noted that all members of the social work teaching staff were expected to be registered with Social Work England. At inspection, it was confirmed that the whole team would contribute to the delivery of the MA programme. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.9

63. Documentary evidence for this standard included completed review documents for existing courses, in the form of a Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Plan and a Course Annual Review. It was noted that these existing processes would be used for the MA, however on review of these documents the inspectors were not assured that they would meet the requirements of this standard. The completed BA Social Work Course

Annual Review document did not include any reference to progression or EDI data, and the template postgraduate version of the review included a prompt to review course data, but did not specify that this should include progression or EDI data. The BA apprenticeship Self-Assessment plan provided progression data tables, but no commentary on this data to provide any evaluation of it or actions in response.

64. This was discussed with the university during the inspection to confirm whether there was any other mechanism in place that may meet the standard. It was confirmed that the head of department had access to progression data, including data on equality and diversity, through Power BI, and that the intention was to ensure this data was included and evaluated as part of the Course Annual Review in future. The inspection team determined that a condition was needed against this standard to ensure this plan was implemented.

65. Consideration was given as to whether the finding 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 we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in [proposed outcome](#).

Standard 3.10

66. Documentation and narrative provided prior to inspection outlined the university's process for ensuring staff engaged in continuing professional development. All academic staff were entitled to 18 days of development leave per year, which they could use for various activities in support of their professional knowledge and understanding. As the social work course team staff were all required to maintain Social Work England registration, this provides a further mechanism for ensuring they maintained their knowledge of professional practice.

67. This was triangulated at inspection, with members of the course team providing examples of how they have used their development leave. Members of senior management also confirmed that they had oversight of each staff members' CPD activities through the university's performance appraisal system. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

68. Review of documentary evidence confirmed that the course and module specifications for the proposed MA have all been mapped against a number of relevant frameworks. These included the Social Work England Professional Standards, QAA subject benchmarks, and Knowledge and Skills Statements for Social Work with Adults and Children and Families. In addition, each module was mapped against the course learning outcomes. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met on the basis of the documentary evidence provided.

Standard 4.2

69. As outlined within standards 3.4 and 3.5, the university had a number of routes through which employer partners were involved in review of their social work programmes, including a Practice Learning Forum and curriculum development and design events (CDDE). Employer partner representatives confirmed at inspection that they and the university also attended Social Work Area Network meetings, where information was shared on regional workforce trends which could inform the development of courses. A Practitioners Into Teaching scheme provided a further route for employer partner input into curriculum design and review.

70. The primary mechanisms for monitoring and improvement of the course would be an annual course report, which must be completed for all programmes at the university, and regular module evaluations for each module on the course. Stakeholder input on course improvements was then gathered through specific meetings; such as those listed above for employer partners (Practice Learning Forum, Practice Assessment Panel, CDDEs). People with lived experience provide their input through Social Work Voices meetings, and ad hoc input around their involvement in course delivery.

71. At inspection, representatives of each stakeholder group confirmed that they provided feedback for the university's social work programmes, and could see material improvements made in response to their input. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met, with the recommendation on standard 3.5 also being applied to this standard. Full details of the recommendation can be found in [proposed outcome](#).

Standard 4.3

72. A number of university-wide EDI policies were provided in support of this standard, along with validation documents for the course which demonstrated that social justice is a core principle of the programme design. The proposed programme's learning outcomes were aligned with EDI principles. There was also an EDI committee as part of

the university's governance structures. Additional verbal evidence was provided during the inspection to support this standard, including examples of staff research covering areas related to EDI. It was confirmed that staff receive regular EDI training and have also received additional training around neurodiversity. The inspectors determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

73. All programmes at the university were reviewed on an annual basis through the processes outlined at standards 3.4 and 4.2, and there are also mechanisms for small changes to be made on an ongoing basis throughout the academic year as needed. Course team members worked to ensure the course was kept up to date by maintaining the currency of their own knowledge of research, policy, and practice. They maintained this currency through engagement with professional and academic networks, including working closely with employer partners. At inspection, the course team provided examples of ways in which they have kept their knowledge up to date and used this to ensure the course also reflected current practice. The inspectors determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

74. The validation documentation and course handbook outlined how the integration of theory and practice would be central to the MA course. There was a category within the course marking criteria which specifically addressed application of theory to practice. The reading lists for the two practice placement modules also included material which demonstrated emphasis on the integration of theory and practice. Several of the assessments on the programme required students to demonstrate integration of theory and practice, such as case studies and reflective writing on direct observations.

75. At inspection, students on current courses confirmed that the course ensured they integrated theory and practice through course content, supervision on placement, and theory circles. Practice educators also provided examples of how they ensured students regularly applied theory to practice. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

76. The university's narrative evidence stated that professionals from backgrounds other than social work regularly delivered sessions on their social work programmes,

including lawyers delivering content for law modules. Learning alongside and from other professions would also take place within placement, where assessment of students against the PCFs would further support this standard.

77. A specific example was provided, and elaborated on at inspection, of a mock mental health trial the university held in which social work students participated alongside law students and student mental health nurses. It was confirmed that the move of the social work programmes into a school with allied health programmes was providing further opportunities for interprofessional learning. A new role had also been introduced in the school specifically to foster interprofessional learning. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.7

78. The required hours of study and attendance requirements were outlined within the course handbook, which stated that students were expected to complete 300 hours of study for each 30-credit module. The expectations around how many of these hours were spent in direct, indirect, and self-directed teaching were stipulated within the module specifications. The university also provided their Student Attendance and Engagement Policy to demonstrate how attendance monitoring and management were carried out. This was triangulated at inspection, with further information provided on how attendance issues were addressed in practice. The inspectors determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

79. The assessment strategy for the programme was set out in the course handbook, underpinned by a university-wide assessment policy. The details of each assessment were provided within the module specifications, where they were mapped to the professional standards, to ensure that those who successfully complete the course were able to meet the standards. At inspection, the course team outlined how the university's block system had been adapted to ensure it met the assessment needs of social work students. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

80. Module specifications were provided for each module on the programme, within which each module had been mapped to the course learning outcomes. All programmes at the university were required to complete internal validation which

included quality assurance of proposed assessments to ensure they enabled students to meet the learning outcomes. Assessment moderation and external examiner feedback provided further assurance of the effectiveness of assessment methods. Progression points through the course were clear within the course documentation, for example, students could not progress to placement until the Fundamentals of Social Work (Preparation for Practice) module was successfully completed. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

81. The course handbook documented the assessment and feedback strategy for the proposed MA, and also set out expectations for assessment feedback. Both formative and summative feedback would also be provided to students during placement modules, through feedback from the practice educator, people with lived experience, and on site supervisor. The university Teaching and Assessment Framework provided further evidence to support this standard by laying out the institution-wide processes in place.

82. At inspection, students confirmed that they received constructive feedback which they were able to use to support their development as they progressed through the course. Students stated that if they ever had a need for further detail after receiving feedback, tutors were available and helpful. They reported that the feedback they received on placement was also constructive and received in time to support their progression. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

83. Review of staff CVs for the course team evidenced that they had appropriate experience and expertise to carry out assessments. University documentation including an external examiner job outline and an agreed copy for the role advertisement were provided, confirming that it was a requirement of the role for the external examiner to be registered with Social Work England and appropriately experienced. The inspectors determined that the standard was met.

Standard 4.12

84. An institution-wide Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework was provided to demonstrate the policies used in development of the programme. The placement portfolio evidenced that students' progression on placement was informed by input

from people with lived experience, practice educators, and supervisors, including through direct observations of practice.

85. At inspection, people with lived experience from the Social Work Voices group confirmed that they provided input to inform decisions about student progression through engagement with skills days and practice assessment panels. The inspection team confirmed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.13

86. Review of the module specifications for the programme demonstrated that the learning outcomes and overall course aims were designed to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice. The marking criteria used for assessing academic assignments also supported the development of critical thinking skills. The proposed MA included a dissertation module which required students to engage in and evaluate research. The assessments for both placement modules also required students to complete a case study, evaluating their own practice experience through relevant theory and research. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

87. Documentary evidence provided by the university for this standard demonstrated that the university provided a range of services to support apprentices' health and wellbeing. These services included confidential counselling, careers advice, and occupational health services as required by this standard. The course handbook signposted students to these support services, and students confirmed at inspection that they were introduced to all of the services available during induction. Members of staff from various university support services provided further detail at inspection of what support they offered to students. For example, there was a counselling helpline available to students 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Regarding careers, there was an employability day held every year where local employers attended, and students participated in mock interviews. It was also confirmed that an occupational health service was available for all professional courses with a placement element. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

88. The university's mapping narrative stated that they used an institution-wide Personal Academic Coaching (PAC) system to provide students with support for their academic development. The course handbook outlined the role of the PAC in supporting students with their progression and development, both academically and during placement. At inspection, students confirmed that this system worked well; their PACs were available when needed and provided helpful support. Support services staff provided details of wider university support students could access for their academic work, such as an academic skills hub which provided support with writing skills and time management. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.3

89. Students' conduct, character, and health was initially established through the declaration and relevant checks made at admissions stage, as discussed within standard 1.4. The placement documentation for both placements then required students to again declare any relevant information regarding their conduct, character, or health at the start of their placement. There was a university-wide fitness to practise policy in place for all courses which led to professional registration, and the course handbook made clear the requirement for students to disclose any relevant potential suitability issues promptly. Examples were provided at inspection of how the fitness to practise policy worked, and course staff confirmed that they were mindful of aligning their approach with employers, to ensure they did not accept students onto the course who employers would not accept for a placement. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

90. The university had an institution-wide reasonable adjustments policy, along with a dedicated disability and wellbeing service who supported students with reasonable adjustments, personal evacuation plans (at university and on placement), and DSA (Disabled Students Allowances). The university noted in their evidence that they had a significant proportion of students who required reasonable adjustments around neurodivergence, and had responded to this by bolstering relevant training in the staff team. An example was also provided of the use of Group Profiles for current programmes, which outlined the challenges and strengths of students across each cohort to help inform how the group was taught and supported. At inspection, students confirmed that others within their cohorts who required reasonable adjustments had received the support they needed, and provided examples. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.5

91. Review of the course and placement handbooks demonstrated that comprehensive information was provided to students about their curriculum, placements, and assessments. Additionally, the course team maintained the virtual learning environment Brightspace which served as a further route for students to access relevant course information. Additional evidence was provided showing that information around the requirements of registration, including continuing professional development, was given to students during the annual employability day. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.6

92. The course handbook for the MA provided clear information to students regarding the expectation to attend all taught sessions, and to notify academic staff as promptly as possible if they could not attend for any reason. The university-wide Student Engagement and Attendance Monitoring Policy outlined the steps to be taken by the university where attendance became a concern. A presentation was also provided outlining the expectations to students around attendance. At inspection, students confirmed that the expectations were made clear to them regarding attendance, both at taught university sessions and during placement. Course staff outlined how any missed skills days must be made up with specific learning tasks which were then checked and assessed. Attendance at placement was tracked and confirmed through the placement portfolio. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

93. As discussed within standard 4.10, the course handbook documented the assessment and feedback strategy for the proposed MA, and also set out expectations for assessment feedback. Both formative and summative feedback would also be provided to students during placement modules, through feedback from the practice educator, people with lived experience, and on site supervisor. The university Teaching and Assessment Framework provided further evidence to support this standard by laying out the institution-wide processes in place.

94. At inspection, students confirmed that they received constructive feedback which was both timely and meaningful. Students stated that if they ever required further detail after receiving feedback, tutors were available and helpful. They reported that the feedback they received on placement was also constructive and received in time to

support their progression. Students confirmed that the university-wide expectation for assessment feedback to be provided within 3 weeks was reliably met. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

95. Review of the evidence provided before inspection confirmed there was a university-wide Academic Appeals Procedure in place. The procedure was available on the university website. The course team confirmed at inspection that any student who failed an assignment was signposted to the appeals policy. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

96. As the qualifying course was a masters degree, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

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

Conditions

Conditions for approval are set if there are areas of a course that do not currently meet our standards. Conditions are binding and 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, we are proposing the following condition for this course at this time.

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	2.3	The education provider will provide evidence of a mechanism in place to consistently ensure that	18 th February 2027	Paragraph 39

		students have a realistic and appropriate workload while on placement.		
2	3.9	The education provider will provide evidence of a mechanism for the regular evaluation of students' progression data, including data on equality and diversity.	18 th February 2027	Paragraph 63

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	3.5, 4.2	The inspectors recommend that the university collate stakeholder input into a central process, such as the annual course report, in order to formalise and consolidate it.	Paragraph 57; paragraph 69

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	Recommendati on 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	Recommendati on 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	Recommendati on 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	Recommendati on 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 with conditions.

Annex 2: Meeting of 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			
2			
3			

Findings