

Education quality assurance – Course change review report

Report date:

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Documentary review details

Inspection ID	UL_2228
Course provider	Lancaster University
Validating body (if different)	Click or tap here to enter text.
Course name	BA (Hons) Social Work
Mode of study	Full time
Proposed first intake	01/09/2025
Maximum student cohort	60
Review type	Course change
Review team	Jo Benn, Stephen Stericker
Review team recommendation	Approved
Regulator decision	Approved

About the review

The BA Social Work programme is undergoing a number of changes as part of a university-wide Curriculum Transformation Programme at Lancaster University. The seven proposed changes outlined by the university are;

1. Two sets of learning outcomes at the end of the programme has been amended to one set for each level of study
2. A minor optional module has been removed from the programme to align with the requirement for all modules to contribute to the programme learning outcome
3. 13 smaller modules have been consolidated into 9 larger modules

4. The dissertation has been replaced with a detailed study relevant to an issue they have experienced on placement
5. Clearer additional transfer and exit routes have been developed
6. Module titles have been amended and course content has been updated to reflect contemporary social work and reflect sustainable values
7. The university is changing from three terms to two semesters

Findings

Standard 2.1

The inspectors determined from review of the mapping narrative and module descriptors that existing placement day arrangements are maintained, with a 70-day first placement, a 100-day second placement, and 30 skills days spread across the three years. The only change is to the module codes to improve ease of identification in comparison with current module code conventions. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 2.2

Updated practice module descriptors confirmed that the only change is to module codes and descriptor detail to ensure currency. As there are no proposed changes to the provision or oversight of practice learning opportunities, the inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 2.5

Assessment of students' readiness for practice is largely unchanged from current programme's approach, with the module code and outline having been updated to reflect currency and enable identification from existing module codes. The module is aligned to the British Association for Social Workers' Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) at Readiness for Practice level. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 3.1

Review of documentation indicated that governance arrangements remain unchanged from the previous programme approval. Some amendments to the management and committee structures are anticipated, but there will continue to be a named Lead Social Worker and Programme Lead. Documentation of university-wide governance and committee structures were provided alongside the mapping narrative. The inspectors agreed that the standard is met.

Standard 3.4

The documentation and mapping narrative indicated that existing partnership structures continue unchanged, with evidence provided of an event held to discuss the proposed changes with employer partners. Copies were provided of the slides presented at this event, and of the minutes of a Teaching Partnership sub-group on curriculum.

The inspectors agreed that the standard is met, with a recommendation that the university consider methods of formally documenting employer contribution to programme reviews, such as recording contributions made by employers in programme management or governance meetings.

Standard 4.1

The inspectors reviewed the course mapping narrative, programme approval documentation, and module descriptors for this standard. The university's curriculum framework has been revised, requiring the course team to amend the course structure from three terms to two semesters. The number of modules on the programme has also been amended, from 13 to 9. The amended modules encompass the content of the current programme, with updates to ensure currency. The modules are fully mapped to the Professional Capabilities Framework and the Social Work England Professional Standards, as well as a range of other relevant frameworks. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 4.2

Evidence for this standard outlined that existing routes for stakeholder involvement remain unchanged and cited a number of formal and informal ways various stakeholder groups' views have been gathered regarding the updated programme. The evidence included reference to student consultation, although students are not included in this standard. A presentation and Teaching Partnership meeting notes were provided; however, inspectors did not consider that the evidence submitted went beyond seeking feedback – refer to the guidance for this standard. Additional evidence was requested and provided, including notes from a curriculum development workshop with attendance from employers, practitioners, and people with lived experience of social work.

The inspectors agreed that the standard is met, with a recommendation that the university consider how they more formally evidence principles of co-production and how they document employer contributions to programme reviews, such as recording contributions made by employers in programme management or governance meetings.

Standard 4.3

The evidence for this standard is largely unchanged from the previous version of the course. As part of the new university-wide curriculum framework, changes have been

made to the curriculum to reflect an increased emphasis on inclusivity. The aim is to reduce the need for reasonable adjustments by making the curriculum design as inclusive as possible, for example, by introducing a 10% allowance on assessment wordcounts. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 4.4

The evidence is largely unchanged for this standard, other than updates made to module descriptors to ensure currency, such as updates to reflect recent developments in policy and practice. Evidence was also provided of the annual programme review process, and the current research portfolios of members of the course team. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 4.5

Evidence for this standard indicates that current practice remains unchanged, with the exception of the reduced number of modules and updated module codes. Assessments have also been reviewed to be grounded more in practice, with the traditional dissertation being changed to an in-depth study of a practice issue. The integration of theory and practice is well documented in module descriptors and learning outcomes. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 4.6

The narrative provided for this standard stated that routes for interprofessional learning through placement opportunities remain the same as the original approval; this is reflected in the module descriptors for the placement modules. In addition, the updated programme includes a module entitled Making Sense of Justice which is a shared module taught alongside students from other disciplines, including Criminology, Linguistics, and Sociology. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 4.7

The evidence for this standard indicates that arrangements are essentially unchanged, with 10 hours' nominal study time per academic credit. However, a more practical approach to teaching delivery has been adopted, with lecture-seminars being replaced by workshops. The overall number of modules in the programme has reduced from 13 to 9, with academic credit redistributed accordingly as laid out in module descriptors. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 4.8

Evidence for this standard indicated that the programme's assessments have been determined to meet the Lancaster Education Framework requirements to ensure realistic, robust, reliable and valid assessments. The assessments across the programme are varied, and assessment loading complies with university guidelines. Assessments are linked to the programme learning outcomes, which are in turn mapped to the Social Work England Professional Standards and the Professional Capabilities Framework. Assessments are spaced to prevent overloading and robust quality assurance processes are in place. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 4.9

The updated programme and associated module descriptors provide evidence of how the university have scaffolded the curriculum and learning outcomes alongside levels 4, 5 and 6 of academic learning. The programme content has also been comprehensively mapped to Social Work England's Professional Standards and the Professional Capabilities Framework. Assessments comply with the requirements of the university's Curriculum Transformation Programme, and are mapped to the level programme learning outcomes, ensuring clarity as to the expected level of achievement for progression within the programme. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 4.12

Evidence for this standard indicated that systems to ensure appropriate progression remain unchanged from the original approval, though the definition of progression within the course has changed to align with the new curriculum framework level requirements. These requirements are transparent, all modules are core and students must pass all modules to progress to the next academic level, with no condonement or compensation of marks permitted. Exit routes and associated qualifications are also made clear. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 4.13

The programme learning outcomes provided emphasise the need for a critical approach, drawing on underpinning research and theories of practice. These are linked to graduate attributes that are built on throughout the programme, and level outcomes demonstrate the requirement to develop critical skills throughout. The change from a traditional dissertation to an in-depth practice-based study requires further demonstration of these skills. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 5.5

Evidence for this standard confirmed that current practices for information sharing with students remain unchanged, with the majority of required information being provided

through the virtual learning environment. The programme learning outcomes and module descriptors are transparent, as is the information provided regarding assessments. Social Work England requirements and expectations are introduced in the first year of the programme, with the knowledge, skills and behaviours developed as the programme progresses. A practice learning website provides student and stakeholder access to placement information and resources. The module Social Work Practice 3 includes content aimed at preparing students for the transition into social work employment. Transition arrangements between the original and updated programmes have also been clearly communicated to students. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Standard 6.1

The evidence for this standard confirmed that it remains a BA programme, therefore there are no changes to how this standard is being met. The inspectors agreed that this standard is met.

Conclusions

The inspectors are recommending that the course change be approved, with a recommendation as detailed within the findings for standards 3.4 and 4.2.

Regulator decision

Approved.