

Inspection Report

Course provider: University of Sunderland

Course approval: BA (Hons) Social Work (teach out) (part-time and full-time), BA (Hons) Social Work (part-time and full-time), MA Social Work (part-time and full-time)

Inspection dates: 12 – 15 December 2023

Report date:	8 February 2024
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	2 April 2024
Date conditions met and approved:	21 August 2024

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Introduction

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

What we do

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

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

9. During this time a draft plan for the inspection is developed and shared with the education provider, to make sure it is achievable at the point of inspection.
10. Once the inspectors and officer are satisfied that an inspection can take place, this is usually undertaken over a three to four day visit to the education provider. We then draft a report setting out what we found during the inspection and if and how our findings demonstrate that the course meets our standards.
11. The inspectors may recommend in this report that the course is approved with conditions, approved without conditions or that it does not meet the criteria for approval. Where the course has been previously approved we may also decide to withdraw approval.
12. A draft of this report is shared with the education provider, and once we have considered any comments or observations they may wish to provide, we make a final regulatory decision about the approval of the course.
13. The final decisions that we can make are as follows, that the course is approved without conditions, the course is approved with conditions or that the course does not meet the criteria for approval. The decision, and the report, are then published.
14. If the course is approved with conditions, we will write to the education provider setting out how they can demonstrate they have met the conditions, the action we will take once we decide that the conditions are met, and the action we will take if we decide the conditions are not met.

Summary of Inspection

15. The University of Sunderland's BA (Hons) Social Work, and MA Social Work were inspected as part of the Social Work England reapproval cycle; whereby all course providers with qualifying social work courses will be inspected against the new Education and Training Standards 2021. The university took this opportunity to make changes to the BA (Hons) Social Work programme and the inspection team considered the revalidated BA (Hons) Social Work course which enrolled its first cohort in September 2022.

Inspection ID	USUNR1
Course provider	University of Sunderland
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	BA (Hons) Social Work (teach out) BA (Hons) Social Work MA Social Work
Mode of study	Part-time and full-time across all courses
Maximum student cohort	BA (Hons) Social Work (teach out) and BA (Hons) Social Work): 30 MA Social Work: 25
Date of inspection	12 December 2023 – 15 December 2023
Inspection team	Nikki Steel-Bryan - Education Quality Assurance Officer Brad Allen - (Lay Inspector) Lee Pollard - (Registrant Inspector)

Language

16. In this document we describe The University of Sunderland as 'the course provider' or 'the university' and we describe the BA (Hons) Social Work (teach out) as 'the BA (teach out)' or 'the course to be taught out', the BA (Hons) Social Work as 'the BA' and the MA

Social Work as 'the MA'. Collectively we will refer to programmes as 'the courses' or 'the programmes'.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 12 December 2023 – 15 December 2023 across sites in Sunderland where the course provider is based. Meetings took place within the Reg Vardy building and within Wearside View. 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.

19. During the same week the BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship course was also inspected by a separate inspection team. Some meetings were held jointly. Details of this inspection are covered in a separate report.

Conflict of interest

20. No parties disclosed a conflict of interest.

Meetings with students

21. The inspection team met with nine students. The BA (teach out), BA and MA were all represented and students covered a variety of levels of study within each course. Two of the students were student representatives and two had been on placement. Discussions included experience of placement, university, and local level support for students, experience of the curriculum and the student's understanding of policies and processes.

Meetings with course staff

22. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the course teams, practice educators, the senior leadership team (SLT), staff supporting practice based learning, admissions, and central student support services.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

23. The inspection team met with co-educators who have been involved in the BA (teach out), BA and MA courses supporting admissions and curriculum delivery. Discussions included the admissions processes, the curriculum and support for the role.

Meetings with external stakeholders

24. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners from North Tyneside council, South Tyneside council and the private, voluntary and independent PVI sector.

Findings

25. 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

26. The course provider submitted documentary evidence which included an admissions flowchart for all courses.

27. For the BA (teach out) and BA, the university also submitted a shortlisting form, examples of the timed written case study activity, the literacy test feedback form, examples of the group discussion questions, individual interview questions and the associated group observation and interview shortlisting form.

28. For the MA the university also submitted examples of the group task, interview questions and written test, alongside the associated feedback forms.

29. It was understood that central support services screened applicants for the minimum entry qualifications and those who met the qualifications criteria were sent to the relevant admissions tutor for further scrutiny. The interview consisted of a presentation from the course team and, where possible, a co-educator, a group interview and an individual interview. Successful applicants were sent the timed written case study activity.

30. The admissions team confirmed that interviews were face to face, however, could be held via teams for international applicants. The interview panel consisted of a member of academic staff, and one stakeholder, which could be either a co-educator, or a practitioner.

31. The inspection team considered whether ICT skills were taken into account as part of the admissions process. They concluded that as the UCAS and postgraduate application forms were submitted online and the written case study was sent, and returned, via email,

applicants were provided sufficient opportunity to demonstrate their ICT skills. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

32. Through discussion with the staff responsible for admission and selection the inspection team heard that during shortlisting applicants were scored on their ability to reflect on experience. It was reported that the course team had recently reconsidered what they expected in terms of previous experience for the BA course, as the programme was attracting a younger demographic of applicants coming through UCAS with college level experience. The admissions staff noted that the process had moved towards a values led approach, whereby college level experience would be accepted, if the candidate could demonstrate social work values.

33. For admission to the MA programme, candidates were required to have paid or voluntary experience, in addition to any college level experience undertaken. However, it was noted that there was no threshold volume of additional experience, as the admissions team considered how the applicant drew on, and reflected on their experience, rather than whether it fulfilled a specific time based metric. The inspection team queried whether unsuccessful applicants were provided with feedback to allow them to reapply in the future and the admissions team confirmed that feedback was provided, and that they had candidates act on feedback and be successful in a subsequent year.

34. The inspection team understood that all applications were considered by one of two admissions tutors, one who supported the BA and one who supported the MA and raised a query regarding whether any benchmarking took place, and, if there was a contingency if one tutor was unavailable. The admission team reported that although no formal benchmarking took place, the admission tutors worked closely with programme leaders, admissions was reported in team meetings and admissions information was centrally stored. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

35. The admissions flowchart submitted by the university outlined the interview arrangements and noted that interview panels were made up of one academic staff member, and either a co-educator or a practitioner. The staff involved in admissions confirmed that the stakeholders invited to take part on interview panels were equal partners in the process, and the co-educators met by the inspection team reported being involved in the group exercise and the one-to-one interviews as a full participant.

36. Through discussion with the co-educators, the inspection team heard that the interview questions had been developed as part of the North East Social Work Association (NESWA) and that these questions were used for social work courses across the region. The co-

educators were involved in the development of the questions, and the subsequent follow up questions, as part of their involvement with NESWA.

37. The staff responsible for admissions reported that prior to undertaking interview responsibilities stakeholders were invited to a Teams meeting where expectations for the interview day were communicated. They covered aspects of interviewing such as looking for the potential to develop within the course and considering whether students demonstrated social work values. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

38. Prior to inspection, the inspection team verified on the admissions flowchart submitted as documentary evidence for this standard that an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and health check took place before an unconditional offer was made. Through discussion with the staff involved in admissions the inspection team heard that where an applicant disclosed any item relating to conduct health or character, or an entry was returned during standard checks, the team undertook a process of anonymous consultation. They asked three local authority partners to consider a statement of reflection written by the applicant and consider if they would offer a placement, or a job, to this candidate in light of their disclosure. Where two of the three partners agreed a placement would still be offered, the candidate would not be rejected on this basis. The team offered examples where a student's conduct did not prevent them from entering the programme, and one example where the reported item was considered too recent, and the applicant was not offered a place on the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

39. The university submitted information on the institutional commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within the admission process which was articulated within the policy and procedure as 'we work to ensure that all students and staff are welcome in our community and do not face discrimination with regard to any aspect of their identity, such as age, disability, gender (including gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy or maternity), ethnicity (including race, colour or nationality), religion or belief (including non-belief) or sexual orientation'.

40. The inspectors were keen to better understand how the policy was implemented on the social work courses and heard that reasonable adjustments to attend interview were considered when an applicant declared a disability. Through discussion with the staff responsible for admissions the inspection team heard that the admissions tutors reflected on the process and made changes to the system as appropriate. For example, the written test had been identified as a barrier for some candidates and was subsequently moved to after the interview so the team could provide information about the test verbally as part of the interview day.

41. During the inspection the course team provided additional documentary evidence that demonstrated that staff undertook mandatory EDI training as required by the institution. However, the inspectors noted that co-educators involved in interviews did not receive any EDI training.

42. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met with a recommendation that the course team consider offering co-educators involved in interviews access to the same EDI training staff undertook. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations section of this report](#).

Standard 1.6

43. The course provider shared the webpages for the courses as a source of information for prospective applicants. Both the BA and MA website included information on the course structure, including module names and descriptions, information on assessment, information on practice placement and the teaching and learning strategy. Both webpages included a clear statement on driving and the way in which access to placements may be impacted for non-driving students, and the financial information in relation to fees was clear. The web pages also included staff profiles, their roles, modules taught and research interests. The university also supplied the BA and MA open day presentations which included information on the social work profession, the role of the social worker and the role of Social Work England. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met with a recommendation that the university review the BA (Teach out) and MA programme specification documents (PSDs) for accuracy in relation to the referred to government departments which appeared to be out of date. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations section of this report](#).

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

44. The PSD documentation and placement handbooks submitted for the BA and MA programmes detailed 30 skills days, one 70-day placement and one 100-day placement. The placements were spread over years 2 and 3 of the BA programme, and years 1 and 2 of the MA programme. The inspection team were content that there was appropriate planning in place to ensure that students experienced contrasting placements, which was confirmed by the staff responsible for practice-based learning. The inspection team heard that a spreadsheet was maintained, and that the coordinator personally followed up by phone any placements that may look similar to ensure the contrast. The inspection team were assured that the system, records and tracking in place to for the 70- and 100-day placements was appropriate.

45. However, the recording of skills days was felt to be less robust. The inspection team found it difficult to identify the skills days in the curriculum from the evidence provided.

During inspection, the inspection team heard that attendance at skills days was not specifically monitored. The students met by the inspection team reported that they would not necessarily know if they were on a skills day or not and were not aware of any particular practice in relation to making up a missed skills day.

46. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that two conditions are set against 2.1 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that conditions are appropriate to ensure that the courses 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 the [conditions section of this report](#).

Standard 2.2

47. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to inspection included placement handbooks and a record of interim review for all the courses. In addition, the university also supplied the 2021-22 Quality Assurance of Placements report. Throughout the inspection, the inspection team heard from a variety of stakeholders that the university maintained positive relationships with the placement providers and other universities within the region. The staff responsible for placements discussed how students were supported to identify their learning needs and that preferences for services could be made. It was reported that students included their learning needs following the 70-day placement in the final report, and that this was used to consider the matching for the 100-day placement. Students were able to provide a preference of service they wished to go into, and in the majority of cases this was able to be met. The placement providers noted that they valued the level of communication they received from the university. Partners representing the PVI sector highlighted that they felt that the allocation of placements was fair, and that they did not feel the university discriminated against the PVI sector. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

48. Evidence submitted in support of this standard included the placement handbooks for all courses. The handbooks contained an induction checklist and practical arrangements. The checklist covered the date a student received an induction timetable and a checkbox to confirm agency policies had been provided to the student including health and safety, violence to staff, equal opportunities, confidentiality, data security and safeguarding. The students met by the inspection team confirmed they had all received an induction. They spoke positively about the support provided by their practice educators, the university tutors and the staff they were working with and reported having the right balance of work on placement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

49. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to inspection included the placement handbooks for all courses. The handbooks contained the induction checklist (c.f. para 48) and supervision record proformas. The university also supplied a document that set out the processes for placement difficulties or concerns, the work based learning agreement proforma and the *Quality Assurance of Placements 2021/22* report.

50. The inspection team felt that the evidence provided met the standard, however, wished to triangulate this during inspection. The students met by the inspection team reported having their preferences considered for placement matching. They felt that their responsibilities on placement were at the right level and acknowledged that their responsibilities progressed as they gained experiences within the placement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

51. Documentary evidence submitted for this standard included module outline documentation. Readiness for direct practice was assessed within SWK124, *Preparing for Social Work Practice*, on the BA course, within SWK114, *Skills for Practice*, on the BA course to be taught out and within SWKM27, *Preparing for Practice* on the MA course. The practice educators met by the inspection team reported that students were ready for practice when they arrived at placement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

52. Following a review of the documentary evidence and through their discussions with key stakeholders the inspection team were assured that the university undertook a process that met the standard. The placement lead maintained a spreadsheet of practice educator registrations, which was checked each December. The inspection team heard that the process had been successful in identifying practice educators who had not completed registration within the current cycle and that these were being followed up by the university.

53. Through discussions with the staff responsible for placements the inspection team understood that the university maintained a record of currency and registration for independent practice educators. However, the currency of those employed by the local authority were understood to be the responsibility of the local authority. The inspection team queried whether the process was robust enough to meet the standard however, acknowledged that the work-based learning agreement was signed by placement providers and included the following statement under section Q8:

‘Responsibilities of the placement provider, ‘provide a placement supervisor (Link worker or suitably qualified Practice Educator) who will manage and supervise the student(s) during the placement to meet the objectives of the Learning Agreement’.

The inspection team heard from the placement lead that ‘suitably qualified’ referred to the British Association of Social Workers (BASW), *Practice Educator Professional Standards for Social Work*. These standards defined currency as direct responsibility for a learner in the last two years, or relevant experience (para 4.7.2) and confirmed responsibility lay with the employer to ensure that practice educators were sufficiently skilled and experienced to maintain currency (para 4.7.3). The inspection team concluded that, given this context, the standard was met.

Standard 2.7

54. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to inspection included the Programme Handbook, section 7.8, *Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing)* for the BA and the BA (teach out) courses and the Programme Handbook for the MA which included *Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing)*, on pg.18. Whistleblowing was also covered in the module guides for placement modules across all the programmes. The students met by the inspection team reported that they understood whistleblowing, knew where to find the policies, and felt they knew what they needed to, to be able to raise a concern on placement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

55. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to inspection included the institutional policy and procedure from the quality handbook on the annual review process. For each course the university also submitted the annual review report and for the BA (teach out) and BA courses the terms of reference for the practice learning group (PLG) were also submitted.

56. The team was unable to ascertain a clear understanding of the course governance arrangements from the documentary evidence provided. Through discussion with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) the inspection team heard that programme studies boards met each semester, and these fed upwards into central university processes for quality assurance and during the inspection the course team submitted a course governance structure which the inspectors noted was clear, and satisfactory.

57. The SLT highlighted the role of the Programme Enhancement Plan (PEP) which had been recently introduced to the university. The PEP included a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis and was a working document that was reviewed at regular intervals over the year. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

58. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to inspection included the work-based learning agreement, a *Quality Assurance of Placements 2021-2022* report and the terms of reference for the PLG. As part of a secondary submission the university also supplied an organisational structure and minutes from the last three PLG meetings.

59. The following module guides were also included as they provided an explanation on the process for placement difficulties or concerns for all courses:

- SWK221, *First Placement Module Guide* - (BA (teach out) and BA)
- SWK323, *Final Placement Module Guide* – (BA (teach out) and BA)
- SWKM31, *Practice Placement Module Guide* - MA
- SWKM33, *Practice Placement 2 Module Guide* – MA

60. Throughout the inspection, the inspection team heard from a variety of stakeholders that the support provided by the course team was positive. Practice educators confidently discussed the concerns process explaining that they had a mentor they could go to if they needed advice, and that they could escalate issues through the university, or raise them during placement team meetings (PTM) meetings. The practice educators felt that their decision over whether a student passed or failed was respected and it was noted that regular meetings occur with students so that issues were identified early. The students met by the inspection team reported feeling well supported on placement.

61. Through discussion with the course team the inspection team heard examples of instances where students were supported with action plans to successfully complete placements, however in the instance of a placement breakdown a Practice Assessment Panel (PAP) would be convened. The PAP included an external partner at manager level or above as Chair, a practice educator drawn from the area of practice and an academic who was independent to the student's course of study. The PAP would make a recommendation to the institutional programme assessment board (PAB) for ratification. The course team provided two examples where the PAP had been convened with different outcomes; one where a placement was terminated and would be re-sat, and one where the placement was terminated, and the student moved to an alternative programme of study. The inspection agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

62. The evidence submitted for standard 2.2 (c.f. para [58-59](#)) was also submitted in support of this standard. Through discussion with employer partners the inspection team heard about a variety of initiatives within each local authority that were designed to support students' health and wellbeing and included weekly supervision, undertaking learning sessions with the ASYE cohort within the local authority, mindfulness sessions, pet therapy, massages and access to a wellbeing officer. The students met by the inspection team

reported being introduced to safety and wellbeing policies when on placement, and feeling confident they would know how to ask for support should it be needed.

63. More formally, the inspection team felt assured that aspects of student wellbeing were covered in the PLA meetings, the relevant policies were included in the induction checklist and placement providers were subject to an annual quality assurance evaluation to ensure the appropriateness of the placement for students. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

64. Evidence submitted in support of this standard included the terms of reference for the PLG and a narrative commentary of the role of the Social Work Education North East (SWENE) group and the North East Social Work Alliance (NESWA). It was understood that the quarterly PLG discussed placement capacity within the institution and that regional capacity was reviewed and considered alongside four other regional higher education institutions (HEIs) by NESWA to ensure capacity for all providers.

65. The university also provided a collection of consultation evidence to demonstrate the way in which co-production had been achieved in the previous two academic years. The documents submitted included a consultation event for the development of the updated BA course which demonstrated attendance by university staff, practitioners, students and co-educators. Similarly, the Programme Management Committee – Curriculum Subgroup minutes submitted included a membership where university staff, graduates of the programme, practitioners, and co-educators were present.

66. The employer partners met by the inspection team reported being involved in the delivery of the courses providing training in areas of social work such as homelessness and reported being invited to the PLG and programme management meetings. The inspection team heard examples where feedback had been provided by employer partners and acted upon for example, in relation to the provision of lapsed PE currency training, and that they were currently involved in conversations around the development of the post-qualification offer. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

67. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to inspection included the sections from the institutional quality handbook on the annual review process, the student representation and feedback policy, example module reports and the annual programme review document for the BA Social Work (including teach out) 2021 – 2022 and the MA Social Work 2021 - 2022. In addition, the university provided evidence of student consultation which included minutes from a consultation event for the new BA Social Work. The inspection team further acknowledged the work of the programme management committee and the PEP quality

assurance process which was understood to be reviewed consistently over the academic year.

68. The students met by the inspection team reported that they had been involved in module evaluations and that the course team acted quickly on the feedback provided. They discussed an example where students fed back that the sequencing on a module meant feedback from one assignment was not received in time to impact the next assessment. This was rectified for the following cohort.

69. Through discussion with the co-educators the inspection team heard that the group felt very engaged with the university and they confirmed that their views were valued by the course team. However, it was noted that while they had the opportunity to have input into the recent programme changes on the BA course, they felt they were asked individually about their views. They felt that it might be more helpful to have a more cohesive approach as a group and reported that there used to be a co-educator group, but at the time of the inspection this was no longer active.

70. Employer partners reported no involvement in the monitoring, evaluation or improvement systems. They noted being able to provide feedback at the programme management committee and identified this forum as where they would report any curriculum gaps or ask questions about the programme.

71. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against 3.5 in relation to the approval of all the courses. 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 the [conditions section of this report](#).

Standard 3.6

72. The inspection team were satisfied that the university's involvement with NESWA demonstrated that the institution, alongside five other providers and employer partners, had a forum to consider placement capacity across the region. Through discussion with the SLT the inspection team heard that the majority of students undertaking the BA and MA programmes were local to the university and that they kept the cohort numbers deliberately small to allow for small class teaching. At the time of inspection, the staff responsible for placements reported that they had the offer of more statutory placements than they had students to place in them. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

73. It was noted by the inspection team that, between the evidence submission, and the inspection, the reported lead social worker had moved onto another role within the university. During the inspection the university provided additional evidence for the incoming lead social worker which comprised of the name, role and registration number of the successor. The inspection team noted that a CV had already been provided as part of the initial evidence and that this included the highest qualification level of the newly appointed lead social worker. The inspection team cross checked the Social Work England register as part of the inspection and agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

74. Staff CVs were provided in documentary evidence for this standard. Throughout the inspection the university invited appropriate staff with specialist knowledge in admissions, student support and wellbeing, quality management, course design and development to meet with the inspection team. The inspection team heard that the university facilitated several opportunities for professional development including PhD or Professional Doctorate study demonstrating the value of a research informed staff base (c.f. para [79](#)). The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

75. The inspection team reviewed the institutional quality handbook section on the annual programme review processes, the annual programme reviews 2021-22 for both the MA and the BA courses and module review reports submitted as evidence against this standard.

76. The university referenced a proxy data dashboard as part of the submission mapping document and the inspection team were keen to better understand how the dashboard could support course staff to evaluate student performance, progression and outcomes. Through discussion with the course team the inspection team heard that the dashboard was available to them via PowerBI and that the PEP reported on and tracked data taken from the dashboard. The course team discussed that the data provided them with a backwards view of the trends. However, their small class sizes allowed them to act more proactively, and they aimed to support students more dynamically across the year.

77. The inspection team were provided with a demonstration of the dashboard which gave them an overview of the information the course team had access to. It was clear from the demonstration that the course team understood the demographics and needs of their cohorts of students. At the time of the inspection the EDI work identified was focussed on cultural capital which reflected the participation of local areas (POLAR) scores reported in the dashboard. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

78. The inspection team reviewed the staff CVs submitted in support of this standard. As part of a secondary submission the university also provided a staff appraisal frequently asked questions (FAQ) document, and the *Policy for Support for Staff Undertaking Qualifications* (the staff development policy).

79. The inspection team were keen to better understand the impact of the ‘excellence through our people strategy’ cited in the staff development policy. Through discussions with the SLT the inspection team heard that, at the time of inspection, six staff were registered on PhD or Professional Doctorate research programmes. It was confirmed that new staff were supported to complete the postgraduate certificate in higher education (PGCert HE) and that there was a target for 90% of teaching staff to be AdvanceHE fellows or senior fellows. The inspection team heard that internal promotion was culturally important to the institution. Staff were given time provision to engage in activities that enabled them to maintain their registration, for example, acting as a best interest assessor, and that development and registration activity was monitored and considered during the annual appraisal cycle.

80. In addition to citing external professional responsibilities, scholarship and teaching development the course team shared that they also engaged with the sessions delivered by external speakers on the BA and MA courses as participants. They explained that it allowed them to remain current in practice and demonstrated to students that lifelong learning was embedded within the profession. The course team did not raise any issues relating to accessing either resources or time to complete registration related activities, or to engage in professional development activities. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

81. Documentary evidence submitted to support this standard included comprehensive curriculum mapping documents that demonstrated how the courses met the BASW PCF, the knowledge and skills statements for social workers in adult services and for child and family social work, and the Social Work England Professional Standards for the BA (teach out) and the MA courses. For the MA course, mapping to the Social Work England Professional Standards was supplied.

82. The students met by the inspection team commented that they felt the course was current (c.f. para [93](#)) and Practice Educators noted that students were prepared for practice (c.f. para [51](#)). The employer partners met by the inspection team reported recruiting students from the courses suggesting that the programme was designed to enable students to demonstrate that they have the relevant knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

83. The course team provided some evidence of consultation with external stakeholders in advance of the inspection. They cited the programme management committee and its curriculum subgroup, and the social work co-educator group as the formal mechanisms where co-production was carried out. The university also cited module descriptors as evidence of co-educator involvement in the programme and provided some additional narrative evidence as part of a secondary submission.

The inspection team were keen to better understand how the university ensured that the views of employers, practitioners and co-educators was incorporated into the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum and asked a series of questions across the inspection to ascertain how and where this took place.

84. Co-educators reported that there used to be a group, however, this had not met for some time (c.f. para [69](#)). They provided rich examples of their involvement in module content delivery and described some examples of how their feedback had resulted in curriculum development, however, there did not seem to be a formal mechanism in place for this activity. The co-educators demonstrated enthusiasm and commitment to the success of the programme and reported aspirations of developing their role further to be able to bring their voices to classroom debates and developing projects with staff such as a podcast.

85. Employer partners reported being asked for their feedback on the new BA programme, and that they had fed into the development of the apprenticeship. They cited the programme management committee as the forum where changes to the curriculum were notified and feedback on the curriculum was sought.

86. The course team provided several examples where feedback from external stakeholders had been provided and acted upon. These included the provision of training for students on employment etiquette such as what to wear to work, as well as developing the curriculum to cover requested topics such as taught sessions on county lines, human trafficking, modern slavery and asylum seekers.

87. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against 4.2 in relation to the approval of this course. 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 the [conditions section of this report](#).

Standard 4.3

88. Evidence submitted in support of this standard included the annual programme reviews 2021 – 2022 for each course, the module descriptors and the *Inclusive Programme Design – Disabled Student* section of the Quality Handbook. The inspection team received a demonstration of the EDI data available to the course leaders via the institutional PowerBI Dashboard during the inspection. The inspection team noted that the team considered appropriate aspects of EDI that were relevant to the demographics of the cohort (c.f. para [77](#)) and that the curriculum had been developed to cover contemporary issues that had an EDI dimension (c.f. para [86](#)).

89. Through discussion with the course team the inspection team heard that the diverse range of student needs were considered when developing the curriculum as the course team implemented the principles of universal design for learning (UDL). In addition, the university intentionally kept classroom sizes small which ensured that teaching staff could provide individualised support to students if it was required. The students met by the inspection team provided examples of support, including an instance where the course team had implemented reasonable adjustments for a student whilst waiting for the LSP from disability support services.

90. The inspection team also acknowledged that the course team reported having flexibility to issue extensions that allowed them to dynamically support students and that the disability support team discussed having a large variety of physical equipment available that students could borrow (c.f. para [126](#)). The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

91. The inspection team considered the currency of the programme through the documentary review of the module descriptors. It was understood that the courses were subject to the institutional annual programme review process, and that the university has recently moved to the PEP which was a continuous enhancement document. The inspection team heard through discussion with the SLT that the PEP was reviewed seven times over the course of the academic year.

92. The inspectors were assured that the courses were continually updated as a result of developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice and heard examples where the course had been developed to include training on homelessness (c.f. para [66](#)) and where staff research was used within the classroom (c.f. para [114](#)). Through discussions with the course team the inspection team heard that the course was updated in light of new legislation. The course teams discussed the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and how it had been covered in the BA and MA focussing on its implementation in practice in the previous two years.

93. Throughout the inspection, the inspection team acknowledged a culture of research-based practice. Staff were engaged in the creation of new scholarship and took part in external training alongside students (c.f. para [80](#)). The students met by the inspection team reported feeling that their courses were current and that they felt prepared for work. They discussed undertaking taught sessions with external practitioners, highlighting an example of a session from a CAFCASS practitioner, and reported having an understanding of the research interests of the departmental academic staff. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

94. The inspection team reviewed the module specification documents for all courses submitted in evidence for this standard and understood that the course teams included case studies to consolidate learning and support students to make links from theory into practice. Through discussion with the course team the inspection team heard that students had weekly supervision whilst on placement and the practice educators highlighted working with theory cards or making use of reflective templates to support students to link their work on placement to the professional standards and PCF. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

95. Evidence submitted in support of this standard for the BA courses included a draft interprofessional learning (IPL) timetable that provided dates and details of the event and the disciplines from which students were attending. Also submitted were the teaching materials from an IPL session as an example. No documentary evidence was supplied for the MA programme.

96. The inspection team understood that IPL was available to all students at each level of their course and that the faculty had a focus on IPL demonstrated by a faculty wide working group. A member of the course team held responsibility for IPL for the courses and sat on the working group.

97. The undergraduate programmes provided opportunities at each level. At level 4 students undertook an introduction to standards and interprofessional learning alongside midwifery, physiotherapy and pharmacy students, at Level 5 a problem solving as a team activity was timetabled and included students from social work, medicine, adult nursing, physiotherapy and pharmacy and at level 6 students undertook a court session in collaboration with the School of Law.

98. MA students undertook the problem solving in teams session alongside medicine, adult nursing, physiotherapy and pharmacy students in year 1 and the social work and the courts session in collaboration with the School of Law in year 2.

99. The students met during the inspection triangulated the evidence received regarding interprofessional learning. Through discussion with the course team, the inspection team heard that in addition to the strong internal relationships the courses had with allied professions taught in the university, conversations were ongoing to develop a relationship with another institution who provide the Educational Psychology Doctorate but who do not deliver Social Work to coordinate learning for these students. The course team also reported that they undertake reciprocal teaching with the course team delivering policing programmes. Social work staff deliver content on mental capacity to the policing students and the policing academic staff deliver taught sessions on the social work programmes. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

100. The inspection team reviewed the quality handbook entry on the credit framework, the PSD and module specification documents submitted as evidence for this standard. The inspection team noted that the PSD documents for the MA and BA (teach out) included statements on volume of credit used for the classification algorithm which were inconsistent with the number of graded credits taken by students. Through discussion with the course leadership team, and colleagues from the institutional quality office the inspection team heard that the algorithm did not include credit accumulated from practice-based activities with a pass or fail component. The inspection team concluded that the number of hours spent in structured academic learning was appropriate and that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

101. Prior to inspection, the inspection team reviewed the annual programme review reports, module specifications and the BA and MA external examiner reports. The inspection team noted breadth of assessment practice which appeared appropriate, and that the external examiner had not raised any issues.

102. During the inspection, the students met by the inspection team described their assessments as varied, citing essays, presentations and observed interviews as some of the methods of assessment they had been exposed to. Students further reflected that they had opportunities to display a range of skills in the assessments they had undertaken. Through discussion with employer partners the inspection team heard that there were no concerns over employing graduates from the university, indicating that the assessment strategy ensured that graduates of the courses were suitable to enter the profession. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

103. The inspection team reviewed the programme specifications for all courses and reported that progress was logically planned and mapped appropriately. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was

able to demonstrate that this standard was met. Through discussion with the course team the inspectors were further assured that sequencing was appropriately considered by the course team as they heard that the level 5 law module on the BA programme had been moved to level 6 to ensure students could maximise the benefit of the module for their final placement.

Standard 4.10

104. Evidence submitted in support of this standard included institutional level policies on assessment, marking and feedback to students on assessed work. In addition, the university also submitted an assignment feedback exemplar for the BA courses, an example feedback sheet for the MA and a range of documents relating to feedback on placements. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was able to demonstrate that this standard was met.

105. During the inspection the inspection team triangulated the documentary evidence with student feedback and heard that students could submit a plan, or up to 10% of the assignment, for feedback in advance of submission. Students reported that feedback was always received on time, and that although feedback was different from different members of academic staff it was helpful. Students noted that they found it useful that staff annotated feedback onto the assignment in the system and that students were able to respond to these comments if they needed to. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

106. The inspection team reviewed the course staff CVs, information on the external examiner for all courses and the notification of practice educator availability template which required independent practice educators to confirm that they were Social Work England registered, and that they were a qualified PEPs 2 practitioner. The inspection team noted that staff and practice educators had appropriate expertise to undertake assessment for social work and that the external examiner was on the register.

107. Through discussions with the course team and the co-educators, and from the narrative provided on the mapping document, the inspectors understood that co-educators were involved in assessment on the following modules:

- SK114, *Skills for Practice*, BA (teach out)
- SWK213, *Working with Adults*, BA (teach out)
- SWK124, *Preparing for Social Work Practice*, BA
- SWKM27, *Preparing for Practice*, MA

108. The co-educators met by the inspection team discussed their involvement in assessment noting that they worked to strict marking schemes and used a rubric sheet. However, they reported that no training was provided for assessment activities and that they did not understand the grade boundaries, or why grades were assigned.

109. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against 4.11 in relation to the approval of this course. 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 the [conditions section of this report](#).

Standard 4.12

110. Evidence submitted in support of this standard included information on the institutional regulations in relation to progression, social work specific regulations and the placement handbooks for all courses. All courses had appropriate derogation from university regulation to ensure that automatic compensation within modules could not occur and that fails could not be trailed.

111. All courses required students to have had three direct observations of practice on each placement, two of which were conducted by the practice educator, and one included service user feedback. The inspection team noted that a range of people were involved in the progression of students including academic staff, practice educators, co-educators and onsite supervisors and that this was supported by institutional and programme specific regulation. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

112. The inspection team reviewed the module descriptors in advance of the inspection and were content that the programme appeared to be underpinned by research and evidence-based practice, noting that research skills were delivered at all levels, as a spiral curriculum and were taught and / or assessed in the following modules:

- SWK114, *Skills for Practice*, BA (teach out)
- SWK220, *Social Work Theory and Practice 2*, BA (teach out)
- SWK321, *Social Work Research Methods*, BA (teach out)
- SWK24, *Preparing for Social Work Practice*, BA
- SWK229, *Social Work Theory and Practice*, BA
- SWK340, *Social Work Dissertation*, BA

- SWKM29, *Critical Perspectives in Social Work Practice*, MA
- SWKM30, *Social Work Research*, MA
- SWKM32 – Social Work Dissertation, MA

113. During inspection the course team highlighted that one of the differences between the BA (teach out) and BA course was that research skills had been moved from level 6 modules, into level 5 to ensure that students had access to research skills prior to the dissertation and the final placement. Additionally, the course team offer an extracurricular journal club for students to support their confidence in reading and thinking critically. The inspection team felt that these examples demonstrated a culture of evidence-based practice within the department.

114. Through discussion with the students the inspection team were further assured that the course team drew upon their research when delivering learning and teaching as students reported that academic staff spoke to them about their research interests and / or their PhD or Professional Doctorate research specifically citing pre-birth assessments. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

115. The inspection team found that, throughout the inspection, student support was articulated clearly within the documentary evidence and triangulated throughout discussions with stakeholders.

116. Central wellbeing support services reported clearly on the forms of support on offer to students which included counselling services. Occupational health services were available via referral to an external provider. Student support plans (SSPs) were available via the university's disability support service and the students met by the inspection team reported positively on their experience accessing and utilising support services. There was no evidence to suggest that there were any issues with the provision of, or implementation of LSPs. They specifically commented that information was available to them on the websites and that they had the same level of access to the support whether they are on campus or on placement.

117. The careers service was available to students for up to three years after they had graduated, and provision was delivered via a subject link careers consultant and in partnership with the course team to develop bespoke workshops, presentations and activities. The inspection team heard that in previous years social work students had received engagement from the careers service in applying for job opportunities within social work, support with application forms and on developing interview skills. Careers guidance appointments were available on a one-to-one basis. Students could book appointments on

the website and the appointments could be delivered face-to-face or online. In addition, the university offered the Sunderland Professional Award (SuPA) which was available to all students and could be undertaken alongside their studies.

118. Through discussion with central support service staff the inspection team heard that the disability support services team offered appointments from 8.00am until 5.30pm. Appointments were also offered over the lunch period to accommodate students on placements. The counselling team had out of hours services for students experiencing difficulties outside of core hours, or who were in crisis.

119. The inspection team heard from central support services that in addition to core business, additional groups were available to students which included a social group for students with autism, and mindfulness sessions as examples. The university also had a centre on campus where students could undertake their assessment for disabled students' allowance (DSA). The careers service offered several optional opportunities for students including the Vigo platform where students could identify and meet with mentors within their sector and a digital incubator and programmes in entrepreneurial skills.

120. As an additional level of student support the university provided a student financial guidance team who offered support with budgeting skills, state benefits relevant to students and student finance. They worked largely on a one-to-one basis with students, however, did provide guidance at open days and inductions for those courses where finance was non-standard or included a bursary, which at the time of inspection included social work. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

121. In advance of the inspection, the inspection team reviewed information on central academic study skills, the institutional policy on personal tutorial support (PAT system) and the social work buddy system. The buddy system provided informal, peer support between stages of study on the courses. During inspection the students met by the inspection team reported having a PAT based on the geographical area of their placements. They confirmed that the PAT visited them during placement and was proactive in organising regular tutorials. Students did not report any issues with the provision of support from their PATs. Through discussion with the course team the inspection team heard that students kept the same PAT throughout their course where possible.

122. During inspection, the inspection team met with staff from the library and the learning technology systems services who provided academic skills training and support. The inspection team heard that the library service was embedded within the curriculum and that students received training in information literacy skills at each level of the programme including sessions on the library, resources, advanced searching techniques, referencing and academic writing. In addition to the face-to-face provision students could access

asynchronous learning, as well as in academic literacy skills and students were able to book one-to-one appointments with either an academic librarian or a study skills advisor. The learning technologies team (LTT) worked with the institutional virtual learning environment (VLE) to ensure that the site upheld the UDL standards, and that module content was compliant and followed the approved structures across programmes. The inspection acknowledged that although the team did not work directly with students the role of the LTT had an indirect impact on students' academic experience. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

123. Prior to inspection, the inspection team reviewed the self-declaration form, an occupational health screening form, institutional policies, procedures and regulations in relation to fitness to practice and fitness to study, programme handbooks and the first and final placement profiles where students were asked to declare any changes to their DBS entries since the certificate was first issued. The inspection team understood that suitability was assessed as part of the application process, and that students were required to declare their ongoing suitability prior to each placement. The inspection team asked students if they were aware that there was a policy and a process for when concerns arise over suitability, and they responded positively, noting that this was discussed in the preparation for placement taught sessions and that it is covered in the placement agreement meeting. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

124. The inspection team reviewed the disability support services information within the student handbook, the disability services website, information on student wellbeing within the student handbook and the student wellbeing website. The university also supplied information on assessment deadlines and extenuating circumstances.

125. The students met by the inspection team reported feeling well supported and provided an example of the process of undergoing a dyslexia assessment which was discussed positively. Practice educators noted that they felt confident supporting students with SSPs and that advice was available through the university should they need it. They discussed supporting students on placement who needed dyslexia software packages and noted that there were occasionally issues around the compatibility of the package offered by the university and what is available in practice.

126. Through discussion with the employer partners the inspection team heard that placement organisations received student profiles and were able to consider any learning needs a student had before offering the placement. One local authority highlighted that where additional needs might be detailed on the profile they consider them in advance of the placement, see the assessment if it is shared by the student, have an action plan and

factor it into practice educator allocation to ensure the student has the support that is needed. The university's disability support services reported having a bank of ergonomic equipment that students could access for loan should they need it in their placement environment. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

127. Evidence submitted in support of this standard included links to the course webpages, the programme specifications and programme handbooks. The webpages and handbooks provided information on the course structure and number of placement days and the placement handbooks included detailed information on each of the placements (c.f. para [44](#)).

128. However, the students met by the inspection team were unclear about the transition to registered social worker. They understood that they would need to register with the regulator but noted that they did not believe any specific guidance or information had been provided about their responsibilities for registration and there was some confusion in the group about what they could call themselves. Additionally, the inspection team noted that they considered skills days part of the curriculum and, as previously reported, the arrangements for skills days were unclear (c.f. para [45](#)).

129. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that two conditions are set against 5.5 in relation to the approval of this course. 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 the [conditions section of this report](#).

Standard 5.6

130. Prior to inspection, the inspection team considered the social work specific regulations for all courses and noted that they detailed a minimum attendance requirement as follows:

‘100% attendance is expected. Any student whose attendance falls below 80% in any module without extenuating circumstances during one semester will not normally be permitted to undertake assessment and will be referred in the relevant module/s and/or may be required to withdraw from the programme’.

The inspection team understood that students signed an attendance contract as part of the readiness for practice portfolio and that guidance was provided in the programme handbooks in relation to attendance that included information on the card sign-in system and what to do in the event a student could not attend.

131. When asked, students articulated that attendance on placement was 100% and attendance in university was 80%. They were aware of their placement dates and reported optional formative forums which they understood were not mandatory but could extend their knowledge. However, as students could not identify the skills days (c.f. para [45](#)) the inspection team were not assured that students were appropriately made aware of what was mandatory.

132. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against 5.6 in relation to the approval of this course. 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 the [conditions section of this report](#).

Standard 5.7

133. Following a review of the documentary evidence provided, and through discussions with key stakeholders throughout the inspection, the inspection team were assured that students had access to satisfactory points of feedback. Feedback was provided formatively in the form of a draft (or 10% of the assignment) as well as on summative assessments. Feedback was also provided by practice educators. Students reported that feedback was timely, consistent and clear (c.f. standard [4.10](#) for more information on student feedback). The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

134. Documentary evidence reviewed prior to inspection included the institutional academic appeal process and the programme handbooks which provided a student facing explanation of the appeals process. The MA programme handbook included a link to the academic quality handbook where the process and forms were available. However, it was noted by the inspection team that the link provided in the BA and BA (teach out) programme handbooks to the institutional process and forms returned a 404 error. The students met by the inspection team reported that they were aware there was an academic appeals process, and that the information was provided to them in handbooks should they require it. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met with a recommendation to update the links in the BA and BA (teach out) programme handbooks. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations section of this report](#).

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

Standard 6.1

The inspection team reviewed the programme specifications for all courses and agreed that the awards for the BA, BA (teach out) and the MA programmes met the standard, noting that non-qualifying exit awards were clearly distinguished from the registered award.

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 must be met by the education provider within the agreed timescales.

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

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	Standard 2.1 5.5 5.6	The education provider will provide evidence that shows the course provider has: - Identified where the skills day within the courses; - Communicated to students when skills days are taking place; - Set up an attendance monitoring process for skills days and a standard process for when skills days are missed.	2 July 2024	Paras 45 128 131
2	Standard 2.1	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that the students due to graduate from the BA and MA courses during the academic year 2023/24 have completed 30 skills days.	2 May 2024	Para 45
3	Standard 3.5 4.2	The education provider will implement regular and effective mechanisms to ensure that employers and co-educator voices are captured in a more formal way.	2 July 2024	Paras 69 84
4	Standard 4.11	The education provider will demonstrate that training has been provided for co-educators involved in assessment to	2 July 2024	Para 108

		ensure that assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise.		
5	Standard 5.5	That the education provider will provide clearer information to students regarding registration, the AYSE, CPD and how to refer to themselves.	2 July 2024	Para 128

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	Standard 1.5	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider providing co-educators involved in interviewing with access to the same EDI training staff undertake.	Para 41
2	Standard 1.6	The inspectors are recommending that the BA (teach out) and the MA PSDs are reviewed and updated to ensure that government departments are identified by their current titles.	Para 43
3	Standard 5.8	The inspectors are recommending that links to university policies, procedures and regulations within the BA and BA (teach out) programme handbooks are checked, updated and reissued to students where necessary	Para 134

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 take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include	☒	☐	☒

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

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

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

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

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

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

Regulator decision

Approved with conditions.

Annex 2: Meeting of conditions

1. 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](#).
2. A review of the conditions evidence will be undertaken and recommendations will be made to Social Work England's decision maker.
3. This section of the report will be completed when the conditions review is completed.

	Standard not met	Condition	Recommendation
1	2.1 5.5 5.6	The education provider will provide evidence that shows the course provider has: - Identified where the skills day within the courses; - Communicated to students when skills days are taking place; - Set up an attendance monitoring process for skills days and a standard process for when skills days are missed.	Met
2	2.1	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that the students due to graduate from the BA and MA courses during the academic year 2023/24 have completed 30 skills days.	Met
3	3.5 4.2	The education provider will implement regular and effective mechanisms to ensure that employers and co-educator voices are captured in a more formal way.	Met
4	4.11	The education provider will demonstrate that training has been provided for co-educators involved in assessment to ensure that assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise.	Met

5	5.5	That the education provider will provide clearer information to students regarding registration, the AYSE, CPD and how to refer to themselves.	Met
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Findings

4. The conditions review was undertaken as a result of the conditions set during the course approval as outlined in the original inspection report above. The course provider supplied evidence and a conditions evidence mapping form which included narrative commentary reporting how the course provider considered that the conditions were met (hereafter referred to as 'the mapping document').

5. In response to condition 1 the course provider supplied a written response to the condition supplemented by mapping tables clearly identifying skills days. The response also included the steps taken to ensure that students were clear which sessions were skills days, for example using a visual badge on presentations and on the VLE. They also provided information on attendance monitoring for skills days which included a reflective skills log. Personal Academic Tutors (PATs) were identified as being responsible for monitoring tutee attendance at skills days and outstanding days were addressed before completion of the final placement. The inspectors agreed that this condition had been met.

6. Evidence submitted in response to condition 2 included a written response to the condition supplemented by the mapping tables of skills days submitted in response to condition 1. The course provider also provided an anonymised table of final year students and the skills days completed for each course. The tables identified gaps for some students alongside a plan to ensure all students had completed 30 skills days by the end of their course. Evidence against condition 2 was subject to a shorter deadline and was submitted in advance of other documentation. The inspectors considered the response to condition 1 alongside condition 2 and agreed that this condition had been met.

7. In response to condition 3 the course provider submitted a written response to the condition that included information on the development of a Co-Educator Forum and the relaunch of the Social Work Programme Management Committee. Also submitted were recent minutes from meetings of each of these groups. The inspectors agreed that the condition had been met.

8. The course provider submitted a written response to condition 4 reporting that a meeting of the Co-Educators forum had focussed on assessment and provided training. The narrative was supported by minutes of the meeting. The inspectors agreed that this condition had been met.

9. In response to condition 5 the course provider submitted a written response to the condition which reported that information on registration, the ASYE and CPD was provided at regular intervals over each programme of study. Supporting evidence included the slide deck for an annual skills day covering the ASYE and a marketplace event with student event feedback. The course provider also submitted an attendance, punctuality and professional conduct agreement students were required to sign. Inspectors agreed that this condition had been met.

10. Following the review of the documentary evidence submitted, the inspection team are satisfied that the conditions set against the approval of the BA (Hons) Social Work (teach out), BA (Hons) Social Work and MA Social Work are met.

Regulator decision

Conditions met.